THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI PRAFUL PATEL): (a) and (b) A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) has been signed between Airports Authority of India (AAI) and Government of Karnataka on 6th October, 2005 and accordingly AAI has undertaken development of Mysore Airport for operation of ATR-72 type of aircrafts.

The Bellary airport is presently not fit for commercial operation. However, for its rejuvenation a meeting was recently held in the Ministry of Civil Aviation with the representatives of the Karnataka State Government and AAI. An AAI team is being sent to the site to explore the possibilities of making the airport operational.

Expansion of Hubli Airport

2275. SHRI JANARDHANA POOJARY: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Airports Authority of India has agreed to expand the Hubli Airport in Karnataka to facilitate operation of bigger flights;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether the State Government of Karnataka has requested for development of Hubli Airport as an International Airport considering Hubli's status as a high industrial and commercial growth centre and its strategic location as a gateway to tourism centres in the Northern part of Karnataka and to facilitate the balanced development of the State; and

(d) if so, the details thereof and the Centre's response thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI PRAFUL PATEL): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. Airports Authority of India (AAI) has requested Government of Karnataka to provide additonal land for upgrading Hubli airport in phases, initially for extension of runway to cater to operation of A320 type of aircrafts alongwith new integrated Terminal Building and subsequently for wide bodies aircraft operations with associated infrastructure. A joint survey of the additional land by AAI and the District Administration has been carried out in June, 2006 and revised master Plan avoiding fully built up area has been forwarded to Government of Karnataka for confirmation of additional land availability,

which is awaited. A provision of Rs. 35 crores has been made during the 11th Five Year Plan for development/upgradation of Hubli airport for operation of AB-320 type of aircrafts.

(c) and (d) Yes, Sir. However declaration of airports as international airports is undertaken on the basis of demands, traffic potential, land availability, resources, commercial viability etc. Considering these factors, at present, there is no possiblity of declaring Hubli as an international airport.

Plans to operate non-stop flights

2276. DR. M.A.M. RAMASWAMY: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Central Government plans to operate non-stop flights to some distant countries;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the steps taken by the Central Government to operate non-stop flights to distant countries to reduce travel time?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI PRAFUL PATEL): (a) and (b) Air India have informed that they plan to operate direct flights to New York and Chicago after acquisition of new Long Range aircraft.

(c) Subject to availability of traffic rights, the actual operations to any destination in a foreign country are decided by the airlines as per their commercial judgement.

Air congestion surcharge

2277. SHRI DHARAM PAL SABHARWAL: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether he has requested the various airlines not to impose congestion surcharge;

(b) if so, whether private airlines operators have responded positively to his request by withdrawing air congestion surcharge of Rs. 150 per passenger;